



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
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CHICAGO, IL 60604

NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday, September 17, 2002

INS Celebrates National Citizenship Day by Welcoming 175 New Citizens

(Chicago) In recognition of National Citizenship Day, 175 immigrants took the oath of allegiance today at the Harold Washington Library's Winter Garden Room. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), in conjunction with the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, held a special naturalization ceremony today for 175 of this country's newest American citizens. The ceremony was held to commemorate National Citizenship Day, September 17 – the day 215 years ago when the U.S. Constitution was signed and the first immigrants to the New World became American citizens.

"Our country's greatness is deeply rooted in our rich immigration tradition," said INS District Director Brian R. Perryman. "New citizens bring unique cultural, scientific, artistic and economic talents that result in immeasurable contributions to our nation."

The Honorable Charles P. Kocoras, Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, administered the oath of allegiance to all 175 citizens. Candidates for this ceremony represented 40 different countries from around the globe, with Mexico having the largest representation (22%), followed by Poland (21%), and then India (15%) and the Philippines (15%).

Keynote speaker Patrick J. Fitzgerald, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, addressed the new citizens and congratulated them on accepting the rights and privileges of U.S. citizenship.

The INS Chicago District Office has provided immigration benefits, including naturalization of new citizens, to Chicago immigrants since July 1, 1897. INS holds approximately 6 citizenship ceremonies each week at the federal district court in Chicago, naturalizing an average of 840 new citizens. Last year the Chicago INS office naturalized over 30,000 new citizens.

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